

**Nablu Working Group
June 27, 2016
Final Meeting Summary**

Attendance

Working Group Members

Essrea Cherin
Sara-Jane Cohen
Liz Fox

Julia Halaby
Paul Heller
Brenda Mehos

Joan Nagelm
Rob Schware

Facilitation Team: Heather Bergman and Raine Girardot

Approximately 20 members of the public were in attendance and observed the meeting.

Reviewing Last Meeting Summary, Draft Protocols, and Ground Rules for Discussion

June 9 Meeting Summary and Protocols

The Working Group revisited their previous decision not to make meeting summaries public in light of staff's reminder that City Council explicitly requested that summaries be made publicly available. Although some Working Group members reiterating their concerns that discussion will be more frank if summaries are not public, the Working Group agreed that final meeting summaries will be posted on the City of Boulder website. The facilitator will prepare draft summaries and send them to Working Group members for review. Working Group members will send any specific suggestions for change to the facilitator, who will incorporate them into the summary unless they appear to change the content of the meeting summary. In such situations, the facilitator will discuss proposed changes with the Working Group at the next meeting to get clear direction on what should be included in the summary. The Working Group indicated a preference for shorter meeting summaries that do not go into lengthy detail. The Working Group protocols will be updated to reflect this change.

Several members of the Working Group indicated that they had not sent comments on the draft meeting summary from June 9. They agreed to provide their comments to the facilitator as soon as possible.

Email Address for Public Comment

The facilitator also reported that the City of Boulder has developed an email address that will allow people in the community to send email comments to the Working Group. Emails submitted through this address will go to the facilitator, who will then share them with the Working Group in advance of each meeting. Members of the Working Group will not use this email address for their own comments. Members of the Working Group are responsible for reviewing the public comment and elevating for full group discussion any comment or question they think merits the group's attention.

Ground Rules for Working Group Discussion

The group discussed ground rules for their meetings. The facilitator provided the following list of proposed ground rules prior to the meeting:

- Abide by the protocols and allow the facilitator to enforce them
- Engage in meaningful and productive dialogue

- Actively participate
- Focus on the discussion at hand; avoid side conversations, which can be distracting for everyone
- Avoid destructive language and personal attacks
- Characterize your own needs, desires, and interests; let others do the same
- Respect the time of the group; speak briefly and on topic
- Learn from the past but let it go; work for the future

Several additional ground rules were proposed by members of the Working Group:

- Be mindful of how much time we are each taking in our comments and be mindful of how much our own voices are being heard in the room
- Stay on observations rather than interpretations and judgements
- Take a moment between comments to give us time to process and reflect before we move on
- Focus on the Boulder Nablus Sister City application and not geopolitical arguments or religion.

The Working Group discussed all the proposed ground rules, raising the following points:

- Council asked us who we represent, so speaking to only our interests may be counter to Council's intent.
- It may be challenging to stick to observations rather than interpretation and judgment.
- We can avoid making categorical statements of truthfulness and acknowledge that we may each have our own truth.
- People will come at this discussion from a variety of directions; we need to let everyone engage in the discussion in a way that makes sense to them.

The Working Group agreed that they would do their best to honor all the proposed ground rules above, understanding that each person may need some latitude one or another of the ground rules in order to feel able to speak freely and actively participate in the discussion.

Additional Perspectives on What Motivates Group Members

Working Group members who had additional information to share about what motivates them regarding the Nablus Sister Cities application were invited to do so. Those who felt they had already shared enough were free to forego this opportunity.

Rob Schware

I would like to say that I have been to Nablus three times: once as an official representative of the World Bank, and twice as a member of Give Back Yoga. I have met with individuals and continue to have relationships and conversations with several yoga teachers there who use our work and are interested in continuing that conversation. When I talk about Nablus, I am talking about real people.

Essrea Cherin

I need to clarify that while I represent the Nablus Sister City Project, my introductory comments at the last meeting were my own and were not on behalf of the Nablus Sister City Project.

Julia Halaby

When I re-read the notes from the last meeting, the one focus that came out was the statement I made about Arabs and Palestinians being labeled as terrorists. I want to amend that to add that there is another generalization that troubles me, which is the idea that being Palestinian is political.

It is not. I am a human. I ask that the group think about the people in Nablus as citizens just like us, not as politically charged entities. Being Palestinian is a whole layer of who I am; this is my culture. I have lived under that mantle my entire life, and it is part of my agenda to de-politicize being Palestinian. If the Sister City application does not pass, I will not stop being vocal about wanting to be humanized, and I will continue to advocate for my people to not be demonized.

Brenda Mehos

I have been to Nablus twice. I had a close friend from Holland who escaped the Holocaust in World War II and was in hiding for 2 years. I was with him when he died. I feel like I have that perspective, too. I do feel neutral because this is about people, just people.

Paul Heller

Bob Yates said at the last meeting that the Working Group was selected with 5 members who support the application and 5 who oppose it. After the meeting I realized that I was counted among the proponents. In my application, I listed myself as neutral. I do not want to see something voted down because the community strives to make it contentious. I want to make sure at outset that it is recognized that I am neutral and that there only 4 explicit supporters of the application.

Brief Summary of the Nablus Sister City Application

To ensure that all members of the Working Group have the same information, Essrea Cherin gave a brief summary of the Nablus Sister Cities Project application. Highlights of this presentation are below. Supporting materials provided by Essrea are appended to this meeting summary and include information about the Sister Cities program and Sister Cities International, as well as a portion of the application that was submitted to City Council. The provided materials are attached to this meeting summary.

- Sister Cities International was initiated by President Eisenhower to recognize that citizen-to-citizen diplomacy is a critical piece to working to create a more peaceful world in the aftermath of World War II. One thing that Eisenhower stressed was the idea that there is a great deal of value in learning about cultures and recognizing similarities (of which there are many) and recognizing differences (of which there are many).
- The Boulder Nablus Sister City Project aims to foster people-to-people diplomacy, people-to-people understanding to create friendship between people in Boulder and people in Nablus.
- There are 60 engaged members in this effort. We engage in a variety of projects, all intended to create opportunities for people in Boulder to get to know people in Nablus. There is information on the types of project we engage in on our website—www.bouldernablus.com.
- We are working as a project to engage with everyday people doing everyday things. This is a community that is facing challenges that come with living in a conflict zone. The people we are engaging with are professors, yoga teachers, engineers, architects, directors of nonprofit organizations, and people who have dedicated their lives to improving their community. There are people like us who want to improve their community. They are grappling with issues like sustainability, water management, women's issues, children with disabilities, and others. They want to learn from us, just as we can learn from them in areas such as homelessness, which is something that American communities struggle with, and they have almost no incidence of and we can benefit from their wisdom in this area.
- Projects include a pen pal program, a yoga teacher exchange, dance classes and cultural festivals, and volunteer efforts.

- We appreciate the opportunity to share this with you and the willingness of everyone here to express their concerns. It is important that your concerns are heard and acknowledged. That makes us a stronger organization. It is important to involve the community in this conversation.
- [Resolution 631](#) has been our guiding document for what the City of Boulder is looking for in a Sister City application.

Clarifying Questions

Working Group members were invited to ask clarifying questions to ensure they understood the application that has been submitted. Comments or concerns that emerged during the question/answer discussion are captured in the discussion summary below.

There is a lot of historical background and some political statements about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the full application. Specifically, this information quoted from the application: "The city's unemployment rates have increased dramatically in recent years, rising from 14.2% in 1997 to an estimate of 60% in 2004. Unemployment in the old city and in the refugee camps is estimated to be as high as 80%. Due to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Nablus has been closed off by the IDF. The city's encirclement with checkpoints is cited by the United Nations as a reason for high unemployment and a "devastated" economy. Many businesses have either moved from or have been established outside Nablus, beyond the tight ring of closures around the city." That wasn't included in the presentation or in the written summary provided to the Working Group. Why not? I was just giving a summary of the project and activities that the project is engaged in. I did not go into complete detail about the application because I was giving background about the project and activities and thought we would address concerns later on.

How can you ensure the staying power of the Nablus Sister City Project? We have a robust organization. When I compare our organization to other Sister City organizations in Boulder, we are on par with all the others in terms of our board of directors, the level of interest, the number of members, and the budget. There is an incredible amount of enthusiasm for this project. The people in Nablus are pushing me to do more. They have 8 other Sister City relationships and have high expectations for their Sister City organizations.

Are any of the 8 other Nablus Sister Cities in the US? They are mostly in Europe, with one in Morocco and one in Russia. Nablus is currently sistered with Lille, France; Dundee, Scotland (District of Great Britain); Region Toscana, Italy; Region Florence, Italy; Como, Italy; Stavanger, Norway; Khasafort, Russia; and Al-Ribat, Morocco.

How can we be sure there are people of good will on the Nablus side of this relationship? When I have met the people there, I have been touched by who they are and their love of humanity. I think the kind of people who are drawn to Sister City relationships tend to be people of good will. I don't think people that have bad intentions are drawn to SC relationships. In the 5 years I have done this, there have been no people of ill will who have come into our program.

How can we ensure that this application is not a gateway for propaganda? Once a Sister City application is approved by City Council, Council goes through a process every year to oversee all Sister City relationships to make sure they are still deserving of an official Sister City connection. Council does a vetting every year; they require each group to provide an annual report and an audit, and you have to provide your budget and associated documentation.

What can you tell us about specific people you have met there? Where have you met these people and how many have you met? I can provide exact numbers and contexts from my last visit at a future meeting.

What new project activities are in the works? We are planning to send yoga teachers to Nablus in April or May 2017. We have people in Nablus who have agreed to arrange yoga workshops and trauma-centered yoga classes for children. We want to take some artists to Nablus. We want to bring together a group of artists who can offer workshops and enjoy the culture that is offered there. I'm planning a working delegation in which members of the Boulder community will connect with their peers in Nablus: water engineers, pharmacists, professors, etc. My biggest dream is bringing young adult folk dancers to Boulder in the fall of 2017.

Group Discussion

Members of the Working Group discussed their current thinking about the Nablus application, including their hopes for what a Sister City relationship could do that is good for Boulder and their concerns about what a Sister City relationship could do that is not good for Boulder. The discussion resulted in the identification of the following concerns and hopes about the application. Included in the summary are some the additional perspectives and comments that emerged during the Working Group's discussion.

Concerns about the Application

- ***Staying power of the Boulder Nablus Sister City Project (BNSCP)***
 - It is not clear that there is enough interest and participation in this on the Boulder side of things to keep it going for years into the future. Other Sister City organizations have substantial local engagement.
- ***Ensuring people of goodwill in Nablus***
 - It is not clear that there are good people engaged on the Nablus side of this relationship who want to engage in people-to-people cultural exchange.
- ***Clarifying the number of supporters in Nablus***
 - It is not clear that are sufficient supporters of the application in Nablus to maintain an ongoing relationship with Boulder for years into the future.
- ***Whether or not the numbers of contacts/hours of outreach in Boulder were accurate or exaggerated and lack of upfront knowledge by people in Boulder that their conversations would be counted as outreach***
 - It was not clear that conversations between supporters and opponents of the application in social settings were considered "outreach."
 - Some people thought these were social interactions only and are feeling betrayed to learn that they were used to support the application.
 - Those who counted these interactions as outreach did not intend to cause harm or hurt feelings; their interactions were genuine efforts to build relationships. They are saddened and troubled to learn that this created mistrust.
- ***Inflammatory language in application and on BNSCP website***
 - There are or have been statements and pictures on the website that are inflammatory. These are troubling, even if the people who made the statements and are in the pictures are no longer involved in BNSCP.
 - City Resolution 631 requires that membership in a Sister City organization not be denied to anyone based on their race, religious, nationality, or expression of an

unpopular belief, so it would be difficult to keep someone with inflammatory perspectives some participating in the project.

- There is information on the BNSCP website that suggests support for terrorism, martyrs, and the destruction of Israel.
- ***Characterizations of all of a group as any one thing***
 - There have been reports about some BNSCP supporters accusing some of those who do not support the application of being racist.
- ***Agenda behind the application and politicization of the application***
 - Accusations about racism on both sides of this issue raise/exacerbate concerns about the application or the Sister City relationship between used to advance an agenda.
 - Some visiting speakers previously supported or publicized through the BNSCP have said things that have been perceived as being political or otherwise inflammatory.
 - Supporters of the application who are engaged in projects in Nablus and exchanges with people there and in Boulder do not see their efforts as political and do not intend them to be political.
- ***Intentions of partner organizations in Nablus***
 - There are concerns about Project Hope (a BNSCP partner organization in Nablus) encouraging anti-Israeli sentiment among Nablus youth through a writing assignment and publication of those writings.
 - Another view is that these writings are the feelings of children and should be viewed as just that. Helping children find ways to express themselves is not necessarily a political act.
- ***Lack of trust in the BNSCP***
 - Comments and actions by past and current members of the BNSCP make it difficult for some people to trust BNSCP, its motives, and its commitments.
- ***Lack of explicit human rights commitment in application***
 - A statement of support for human rights is required of all Sister City applications by Resolution 631.
 - Human rights in Nablus are a major concern—women's rights, LGBT rights, rights to free speech, etc.
- ***Glorification of terrorism/martyrs by Nablus government***
 - There is information on the website of the Nablus government that suggests support for terrorism, martyrs, and the destruction of Israel.
- ***Implications of approval of the application***
 - It is not clear what approval of this application will mean for Boulder, how we interact with each other, and how we are perceived in the world.

Hopes about the Application

- ***Opportunities to see something very different (e.g., a different culture)***
 - Lives in Nablus are different from lives in Boulder. Learning about them can create an interest in global affairs and help our youth become more engaged in the world.
- ***Learning about life in a conflict zone, parallels to US/Mexico border issues***
 - There are people (including children) in Boulder whose lives are not so very different from the stories from Nablus. Life in conflict zones with border issues are challenging for everyone. There are parallels to things Boulderites live with every day.

- ***Walking in someone else's shoes as a mean to creating empathy; seeing is different than reading***
 - Becoming more aware of the details of the day-to-day lives of other people can deepen our empathy for them and help us find better ways of being.
 - Learning about everyday people in Nablus and having Boulderites visit there can help us learn that they are like us and can create a counter-narrative to the idea that "all Palestinians are terrorists."
- ***Deepening and expanding what is already taking place between Boulder and Nablus***
 - There are a lot of good exchange programs and other efforts already underway between Boulder and Nablus. An official Sister City relationship will help deepen and expand these efforts to create opportunities for more people to engage in them.
- ***Helping Nablus with special education and other challenges; helping them learn from us and Boulder citizens learning from this ancient and highly evolved culture***
 - People in Nablus want to learn from Boulder and how we work with children with disabilities; we want to help them. They are also interested in learning about women's issues and shelters. We can add value to their community from our own experiences, and we can learn from them about homelessness and other issues.
- ***Increasing awareness about the difference between truth/experiences and news/rumors***
 - A Sister City relationship would help us all to better understand the difference between the everyday lives of people in Nablus and what we read in the newspaper and hear from other people.
 - It is important to remember that while they are good people with good hearts and good experiences in Nablus, there are also terrorists. People have been hurt and killed in the region. It is important not to gloss over that. There is a dichotomy of experiences that we cannot ignore.
- ***Increasing understanding of the experiences of the people of Nablus: "An enemy is a person whose story you haven't heard."***

Next Steps

The next meeting of the Nablus Working Group will be on Tuesday, July 12, from 5:30 pm to 8 pm at the Municipal Service Center in Boulder. At that meeting, the Working Group will discuss in greater detail the following:

- How to ensure that the Nablus Sister City Project does not become a platform for propaganda or politics
- How to improve communications, accuracy, and transparency in the BNSCP activities, website, and overall interaction with the community

Each member of the Working Group will think about *at least one specific suggestion* for each of the two discussion topics; more suggestions are welcome if Working Group members would to provide them. Each member will send his/her specific suggestions for each topic to the facilitator by 5 pm on Friday, July 8. The facilitator will prepare a non-attributory summary of all the ideas submitted for each topic and distribute it to the Working Group in the morning of Monday, July 11. Working Group members will review the document prior to the meeting.

What Are Sister Cities?

A sister city, county, or state relationship is a long-term partnership between two communities in two countries. A sister partnership is officially recognized after the highest elected or appointed officials from both communities sign an agreement establishing the relationship.

What Do Sister Cities Do?

Sister cities plan and implement cooperative activities and exchanges with their counterparts in other countries. These activities typically fall into four categories: youth and education, community development/municipal exchange, business and trade, and arts and culture. Within these categories there is tremendous breadth of diversity, as each community uses its unique resources, history, geography, needs, and citizenry to guide its activities.

How Do You Join?

Interested in becoming a member? Fill out the membership application form at sistercities.org/membership. If you have any questions about membership plans, please contact us at 202.347.8630 or membership@sistercities.org.

915 15th Street NW, 4th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
(tel) 202.347.8630
(fax) 202.393.6524
info@sistercities.org



Santa Clara, California and Limerick, Ireland sister city signing

Sister Cities International provides essential services, programs, and resources to help members find partners as well as expand and improve their activities. Your membership provides you not only with access to unique tools and resources but also to dedicated staff assistance and guidance to build and enhance your sister city program. Our staff has worked with hundreds of cities in countries around the world. Whether you are a volunteer, community leader, or municipal official, membership in the Sister Cities International network can help you save time and money.

In addition to resources and expertise, membership with Sister Cities International ensures that your program is in the largest network of citizen diplomats in the world, and is a part of a peacebuilding tradition that has made the sister cities movement spread across the globe.

About us

Sister Cities International is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that serves as the national membership organization for individual sister cities, counties, and states across the United States. This network unites thousands of citizen diplomats and volunteers from more than 525 U.S. communities with over 2,000 partnerships in more than 140 countries.

Sister Cities International was created at President Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1956 White House Summit on Citizen Diplomacy. He envisioned an organization that would be a champion for peace and prosperity by fostering bonds between people from different communities around the world.

What We Do

Sister Cities International supports private citizens, local organizations, and municipal officials who conduct exchanges and activities under the umbrella of the sister cities movement. Every day, we strengthen and grow the sister cities network by providing support to our members through programs, grants, services, and networking opportunities.



SCI's Youth Leadership Summit participants



New sister city partners - Concord, North Carolina and Freeport, Bahamas

For six decades, Sister Cities International has served as a hub for institutional knowledge and best practices in the field of citizen diplomacy.



"As mayor I have committed myself to making sure Tacoma has a sister city program that's strong. If we want to attract more investment to our city, if we want to raise our profile, sister cities is something we have to invest in."

Mayor Marilyn Strickland
Tacoma, Washington



"Concord might never have paired with Freeport, Bahamas had it not been for the assistance of the Cities Seeking Cities program. We were contacted regularly by the program to see how things were coming along. Concord Sister Cities Association is most grateful for the help and guidance and will most certainly turn to SCI again when looking for another sister city in the future!"

John Dunlap
President, Concord Sister Cities
Association



"We have come to rely on Sister Cities International to support us with tools for more effective marketing, media relations, and fundraising...simply put, SCI has made us more effective and more visible."

Barbara Pratzner
President, Greater Columbus Sister
Cities International

Why Join?

Your Switchboard to the World

- **Sister Cities Networking:** At Sister Cities International, we believe in peer-to-peer learning. Want to host a youth exchange? Lead a business delegation? We can connect you with other experienced members for an exchange of ideas to help you find solutions.
- **Connect with the Diplomatic Corps:** Sister Cities International works closely with the U.S. Department of State and its diplomats as well as foreign embassies in the U.S. Let us connect you with the right officials and help you get the answers and support you need.
- **Annual Membership Directory:** Be featured in the Annual Directory, Sister Cities International's flagship publication! This listing of all member cities and their partnerships is distributed to our entire network, municipal and federal governments, and the diplomatic community.

Programs & Services

- **Cities Seeking Cities:** Looking for a sister city? Our Cities Seeking Cities program provides you with dedicated staff assistance and the necessary connections to municipal officials, twinning organizations, and the diplomatic community to help you find a partner city.
- **Governance and Policy Services:** Confused about how to start a sister city organization, structure your bylaws, or establish other policies to lay the foundation for a sister city program? We will guide you at every step as you establish and grow your partnerships.
- **Young Artists & Authors Showcase:** Open to all youth in member cities, the Showcase is a chance for them to submit artwork, essays, and poems inspired by an annual theme. Winners receive cash prizes and top entries tour the U.S.
- **High School Homestay:** This exchange program enables member cities to host high school students for a year or semester. We assist with processing exchange visas for the youth and makes it a simple and rewarding experience for students and host families.
- **Annual Awards:** The Awards highlight sister city programming excellence in a number of competitive categories and programmatic areas.

Discounted Rates: As a valued member of Sister Cities International, you are eligible for discounted member rates for all of our conferences and events.

Telling Your Story

- **Share Your Story:** Let us tell your story to the world. We publicize your success through website articles, social media, press outreach.
- **Member Profiles:** Show off your sister city program with a customizable member profile as well as profiles for all of your sister city partnerships.
- **Event & Delegation Promotion:** Need help promoting an upcoming inbound or outbound delegation? We can help spread the word through targeted emails, social media, and press outreach.
- **Crisis Communications & Media Relations:** International events can catch any communications team off guard. We can guide you on how to effectively represent your program in times of crisis or controversy. Our media partnerships and media outreach can ensure that your activities get the attention they deserve.

Providing Resources that Matter

- **Visa Consultations:** Worried about an upcoming delegation? Get pro bono consultations from immigration lawyers for questions regarding inbound delegations or visa applications.
- **Background Checks:** All Sister Cities International members receive access to discounted Intellicorp background check services for host families, chaperones, or new hires.
- **Insurance:** Get access to discounted traveler's insurance for individuals or groups through Sister Cities International's partnership with International Medical Group (IMG).
- **Medical Services:** Sister Cities International has teamed up with Passport Health to provide members with discounted immunizations and other medical services.
- **Certificates:** Commemorate a new sister cities partnership or anniversary with our custom-made certificates.
- **Toolkits and Templates:** Get access to handy guidelines, templates, and best practices for exchanges, policies, and other topics relevant to sister city program development.
- **Grants Database:** Sister Cities International provides members with information on opportunities from private foundations and public organizations to help you find resources to expand your program.
- **Webinars:** Build key skills and hear from experts in our webinar series. Topics include grant-writing, fundraising, and volunteer recruitment.

525 U.S. Cities
2,000 Connections
145 Countries
Unlimited Possibilities

Questions? Email membership@sistercities.org or call 202.347.8630.
Visit www.sistercities.org/membership to become a member today.



Sister Cities International

Frequently Asked Questions

Below you'll find some of the most commonly asked questions regarding sister cities and Sister Cities International. If you have any additional questions please contact us at info@sistercities.org.

Q. WHAT IS A SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP? A sister city relationship is a long-term, cooperative relationship between two cities in different countries through which cultural, educational, business, and technical exchanges take place. It is formalized when two mayors (or highest elected/appointed officials) sign a memorandum of understanding establishing a sister city relationship. Activities are usually organized and implemented by volunteers, local institutions, and municipal employees. A city may have any number of sister cities.

Q. WHAT DO SISTER CITIES DO? Sister city organizations plan and implement cooperative activities and exchanges in cultural, educational, municipal/technical, business, and humanitarian fields. Thousands of inbound and outbound exchanges take place every year, as well as virtual exchanges and other remote, cooperative activities.

Q. WHAT DOES SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL DO? Sister Cities International is a nonprofit member association for U.S. sister city organizations. Its staff provides assistance and expertise to over 500 member communities to help strengthen their sister city organizations. It shares best practices, provides grants and funding opportunities, assists with protocols and procedures related to sister cities, advocates for sister city organizations and international exchange, organizes conferences and meetings, publishes a printed and online directory of sister cities, networks among its membership, and provides other resources including certificates, discounted travel insurance, visa consultations, webinars, and toolkits, among other benefits.

Q. WHO RUNS SISTER CITY ORGANIZATIONS AND HOW ARE THEY STRUCTURED? All of Sister Cities International's members are independent organizations and have a number of management structures. Sister city organizations may be run by a group of volunteers, representatives from local institutions, the mayor's office or municipal government, or by some combination of these. Most often sister city organizations are incorporated as 501(c)(3) nonprofits, although the municipal government may have representation or a formal relationship with the group. Many are governed by a board of directors or commission, although the majority of members are volunteers from all sectors of the community. They are most often organized by committee, with one committee for each partnership responsible for creating and implementing projects. Some sister city organizations are run by local institutions, such as a museum, cultural center, or chamber of commerce. Most municipal contacts for sister city organizations are in the office of the mayor, office of tourism/convention and visitors bureau, office of international affairs, office of protocol, or office of economic development.

Q. HOW CAN I FIND OUT WHAT MY SISTER CITIES ARE? Visit our online interactive directory at www.sistercities.org. The online directory includes sister city relationships, contact information, and website/Facebook information for all current members. You can also view our printed 2015 Membership Directory and Annual Report at www.sistercities.org/2015Directory.

Q. HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED WITH MY LOCAL SISTER CITY ORGANIZATION? Visit our online directory at www.sistercities.org and search for your community. You should find the primary contact information for your sister city organization. If you don't find your city it means they are not currently a member of the Sister Cities International network.

HOW DO TWO CITIES BECOME SISTER CITIES?

A relationship is formally created when the mayors or highest elected officials from two communities sign a memorandum of understanding establishing the sister city partnership. However, this is usually the result of a long process that involves the local sister city organization along with the municipality and other local institutions. Sister city relationships may develop from a number of sources, including but not limited to: preexisting mayoral relationships, trade relationships, historical connections, ancestral/demographic connections, expatriate communities, shared geographic/sector challenges, faith-based groups, and personal experiences ranging from study/work abroad to marriages.

You might try some basic research online or contact the town clerk, mayor's office, or office of international affairs to see if they can put you in contact with your sister city organization. Most sister city committees have regular meetings that are open to the public.

How do I become a member of Sister Cities International?

Find out more about membership with Sister Cities International at sistercities.org/membership. If you have any questions about membership plans, please contact us at 202.347.8630 or membership@sistercities.org.

Q. How do I set up a sister city organization for my city? Setting up a sister city organization is a large undertaking, and is best done as part of a committee or city-wide group. First, check our directory (and do some basic web research) to see if your city already has an organization. You should not try to start a new sister city or sister city organization without first engaging an existing organization. If your city does not have an organization and you would like to start one, please contact us at membership@sistercities.org and we can talk with you about the steps you would need to take.

Q. How can I create a new sister city? Sister Cities International requires only that the mayors or highest elected officials from the two communities sign an agreement to become sister cities, although many cities have their own requirements and some cities may decide to limit the number of sister cities they have. You should first contact your local sister city organization if you have not done so already and talk to them about their process. Usually a group will first contact the mayor/city government to see if they are at least open to the possibility of a new relationship (some cities cap the number of sister cities they have). Please visit www.sistercities.org/cities-seeking-cities for more information on creating new sister cities.

Q. Do you provide funding for projects? Sister Cities International does not provide funding for unsolicited projects or exchanges. However, we do provide funding for dues-paying sister city organizations through grants or other organizations as they become available. These usually have a geographic or programmatic focus and have other requirements depending on the grant. For more information on current grant programs please visit the Grants section of the member area. All grant application opportunities are announced on our website and through member updates. To sign up for our mailing list simply create an account on our website at www.sistercities.org and make sure you do not opt out of receiving Sister Cities International's emails.

Q. What is the difference between a "Sister City" and a "Friendship City"? The terms "sister city" and "friendship city" sometimes have different meanings. Generally speaking, friendship cities are less formal than sister cities. In some cities, "friendship city" is often used as a first stage in the relationship, and after it is strengthened and the partners are sure they want a long-term relationship they will become "sister cities".

Q. Can non-U.S. cities join Sister Cities International? Yes, Sister Cities International allows non-U.S. cities to join as Global Members. Global Members have access to Sister Cities International's "Member Area" and are listed in our online and printed directory with all of their sister city partnerships (not just partnerships with U.S. cities). For more information on joining Sister Cities International visit us at www.sistercities.org.

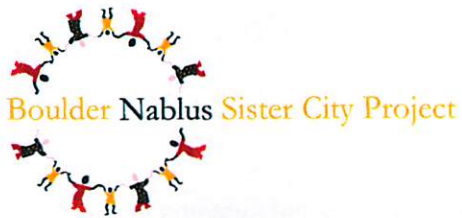


Q. I don't see one of our sister cities located on Sister Cities International's directory or website. Why? Sister Cities International tries to keep an accurate record of all partnerships, although often times a city may form a new partnership and not inform us. If you think a city doesn't appear in our records but should please contact us at info@sistercities.org. Please note that Sister Cities International only lists partnerships of communities which are members of the Sister Cities International network.



Connect globally. Thrive locally.

915 15th Street, NW, 4th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
(tel) 202.347.8630
info@sistercities.org



December 23, 2015

Mayor Suzanne Jones
Boulder City Council
1777 Canyon Drive
Boulder, CO 80302

Dear Mayor Jones and City Council Members:

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to submit an application for approval of Nablus, Palestine as Boulder's eighth sister city. You will see in perusing the attached documents that we have met, if not exceeded, all criteria established by City Council Resolution 631.

As you may recall, a similar application was submitted to City Council for consideration at a hearing on June 10, 2013. At that time, a majority of the council chose not to approve the application and directed members of the Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project (BNSCP) to continue activities that connect Boulderites with the citizens of Nablus and to engage the Boulder community so that the benefits of having Nablus as a sister city were better understood.

A careful reading of the application will convey a clear sense of the extensive outreach that has been made in both communities. More than half the members of the board of directors have traveled to Nablus and met with active citizens who support the relationship and are enthusiastically prepared to support delegations from Boulder. Relationship building continues from afar as we pursue common goals and collaborate on projects together.

Equally important outreach, amounting to hundreds of hours, the members of the BNSCP have met with individuals who spoke against our proposal in 2013, as well as the broader community, on numerous occasions. These forums have provided a great opportunity to explain the mission of the organization, the value of sister city programs around the world, and specific benefits the citizens of Boulder have and will derive from people-to-people relationships with citizens in Nablus.

To highlight just a few of these benefits to the Boulder community that we have observed:

- a great many people in our community are intrigued to learn more about Palestine and the Middle East more broadly;



- connections, friendships, and conversations have sprouted across belief systems in ways that did not exist prior to this project;
- we have learned of newly created non-profits that were inspired by and emerged in response to our own activities in the region;
- throughout the city of Boulder, and even to some degree in the Front Range, there is considerably more familiarity with Palestinian people, culture, heritage, arts, and geography.

Many have asked how Nablus was selected as a sister city. Boulder and Nablus have so much in common that they are natural sisters for each other. For example, Nablus is a similar size, also nestled into the nearby foothills, has a vibrant pedestrian downtown area, is known for its friendliness, and benefits from a large university within its borders. Not only that, 40% of the population are 15 years of age or younger, making Nablus an ideal community to have a significant impact upon by engaging the youth in healthy ways.

It also feels important to speak to the current turbulent period in the Middle East. We believe that there is no better moment for people-to-people connections that can contribute to further understanding. Boulder has initiated several of its sister city relationships in unsettled times and they have succeeded because sister city relationships are apolitical and tend to arise out of a desire to know these 'Others'. Even now, looking back it is challenging to imagine how sistering with Nicaragua or Tajikistan or Lhasa could have been controversial because times and governments change — but what remains throughout **are the people**.

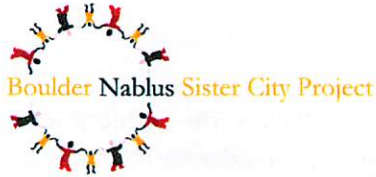
President Eisenhower believed in the power of citizen-to-citizen engagement which led him to found Sister Cities International (SCI). He saw clearly how citizen diplomacy could contribute to a more peaceful world. That said, we are aware that BNSCP is not going to solve the issues that exist in the Middle East, but one never knows how people-to-people connections will influence the world. And that is the beauty and power of sister city relationships.

Thank you for considering this application. We look forward to expounding on the merits of it during a public hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Essrea Cherin".

Essrea Cherin
Board Chair



BNSCP application 2015

Boulder City Council

Pursuant to Boulder Resolution 631, **Establishing City Affiliation Policy**, the Board of Directors and members of the Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project respectfully submit this application for your review and action.

The objectives of the Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project are:

- A. To enhance mutual understanding and curiosity among citizens of two similar cities from vastly different parts of the world.
- B. To encourage educational, cultural, recreational and technical exchanges which promote greater understanding and appreciation of the uniqueness of citizens in Boulder and Nablus.
- C. To enable citizens of Boulder to have opportunities to give service to and derive benefit from community projects in Nablus.
- D. To promote activities and programs that provide citizens in each community expressions of goodwill, cultural exchange and education.
- E. To act as a coordinating body for other groups or individuals desiring to better understand the Nablus community.

Boulder and Nablus are cities that have many similarities that enhance the likelihood of a successful sister city relationship. Both cities have considerable experience with sister city arrangements. Boulder is associated with seven such partnerships (Dushanbe, Tajikistan; Jalapa, Nicaragua; Lhasa, Tibet; Mante, Mexico; Yamagata, Japan; Yateras, Cuba; Kisumu, Kenya). Nablus is currently engaged with eight sister city relationships (Lille, France; Dundee, Scotland; Toscana, Italy; Florence, Italy; Como, Italy; Stavanger, Norway; Khasafirt, Russia; Al-Ribat, Morocco).

Although Nablus has roots far back in history (72 CE), the modern Nablus municipality was founded in 1869, ten years after the Boulder City Town Company was organized. Both cities are home to a major public university. Boulder's population is approximately 98,000 and Nablus has in its city core approximately 136,000 residents. Both communities have pedestrian friendly commercial districts in their center. Both cities are nestled into the surrounding foothills and are known for their friendly residents.

The background information about Nablus (contained within the packet submitted with this application) highlights the many similar issues faced by the two communities while at the same

time it identifies numerous unique challenges faced by the residents of Nablus. The partnership with Nablus captures the very essence of the Sister City Policy outlined in Boulder Resolution 631.

On June 10, 2013, the City Council reviewed an application to designate Nablus, Palestine, as Boulder's eighth sister city. At that time, a majority of the council chose not to approve the application and requested that members of the Boulder Nablus Sister City Project reach out further to citizens in the Boulder community regarding the benefits and reasons for having Nablus as an official sister city. Council members also expressed a desire for the BNSCP board of directors to develop closer ties with citizens in Nablus who are supporting Boulder as a sister city. Our organization has been actively engaged in numerous outreach efforts both in Boulder and Nablus. We will briefly mention the activities below and after that will provide a summary of each activity.

With citizens of Nablus, the BNSCP has engaged in the following projects since June 2013:

1. Fulbright Professor Assigned to An Najah University
2. Pen Pals with Children
3. Teaching and Volunteering in Nablus with Project Hope and Pioneers School
4. Delegations and Establishing Citizen Group in Nablus
5. Yoga Exchange and Support
6. Senior Center
7. Substance Abuse Counseling
8. Art Exchange
9. Dance Troupe
10. 100 Soccer Balls (Futbols)
11. Rock Climbing Wall (or Gym)
12. Early Readers Program
13. Artisans and Craftspeople Connection

The BNSCP has pursued the following activities to build bridges within the community of Boulder:

1. Dialogues and social gatherings with leaders of group 'opposed' to 2013 application
2. Attending events produced by the group who were 'opposed' to the 2013 application
3. Lemon Tree discussions and presentations
4. Community-wide Talks, Lectures and Outreach activities

Connecting citizens from Nablus and Boulder

Summary of activities from June 2013 to present

Fulbright Scholar

- The US State Department awarded a Fulbright teaching post to Board member Dr. Deborah Young. Dr. Young, of Naropa University's Early Childhood Education Department, worked for 6-weeks with An Najah University in Nablus, September - October, 2015. This is the first Fulbright ever granted to An Najah University. Dr. Young offered 6 workshops to educators and professionals who work with women and children, in addition to collaborating on designing and developing curriculum and programs for educators working with developmentally disabled children.
- Dr. Young's contributions to An Najah's Education Department were enthusiastically received. A report, that was submitted to the US State Dept, of her efforts in Nablus can be viewed on the Boulder-Nablus Sister City website under the Education tab.

Student Pen Pal Programs

- Two schools (4th - 8th grade) in Boulder are engaging with same-aged students in schools in Nablus. Teachers at the schools conduct activities where the children can share about each other's cities, schools, families, food, and activities through writing letters, creating powerpoint presentations, and videos for each other.
- Due to the resounding success of the pen pal program in the school year 2014 - 2015, additional schools and teachers in both Boulder and Nablus have volunteered to begin pen pal programs for their students in the 2015-2016 school year.
- There are several additional teachers in Nablus who await colleagues in Boulder-area schools to begin a pen pal exchange for their students as well.

Pioneers Baccalaureate

- Three young adults from Boulder have applied to teach at Pioneers Baccalaureate School in Nablus for the 2015 - 2016 school year. Two have accepted the teaching post and are currently serving as teachers.
- Supported a campaign to supply copies of English books so that their students will be able to expand their English repertoire.

Project Hope

- Sent five volunteers to serve at non-profit organization in Nablus that supports the neediest children's organizations of Nablus.
 - Volunteers donated combined 8 months of time working with hundreds of school-aged children, teaching English, dance, art, and more.
 - BNSCP supports the programs offered by Project Hope through the sale of olive oil soap in the Boulder-area with a portion of the proceeds going back to the non-profit.
-

Delegations

- Thirteen members of Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project visited Nablus in the past 30 months, seven of whom are on the Board of Directors.
 - Met with over two dozen citizens comprising Directors of non-profit service organizations, university professors, elementary and high school teachers and administrators, substance abuse counselors, psychologists, cultural center directors, music conservatory teachers and administrators, senior center founders, artisans, members of city council, architects, the mayor, and more.
 - Interviewed the individuals who serve as the coordinators of sister city relationships with Lille, France, Stavanger, Norway, and Dundee, Scotland. Learned enormous wealth of ideas from these seasoned 'sisters', some of whom have been in existence for several decades.
 - Delegations have toured a number of NGOs in Nablus whom our members and project have supported in a variety of ways: Asira Senior Center, Project Hope, Askar Refugee Camp Dance Troupe, Pioneers Baccalaureate School, American Academy, Tomorrows Youth, the Child Institute, Nablus Hospital, the French Cultural Center, Yafa Cultural Center, Nablus Old City Cultural Center, Edward Said Conservatory of Music, and many many more.
-

Sister City Committee in Nablus

- Identified a handful of citizens who have established a committee to engage citizens in Nablus with Boulderites. This citizen group includes Hakim Sabbah, Salem Hantoli, Rami Sawalha, Zeina Ramadan, Mirna Ali Alhindi, Hasan Ayoub, and Amjad Rfaie.
-

Yoga Program

- Hosted two yoga teachers in Boulder for two weeks. The women were enrolled in advanced yoga training titled, Calming Kids Yoga, that was donated by the Boulder yoga community.

- Once returned to Nablus the women began sharing their newly acquired skills to educators, counselors, therapists, and others who work with children.
- They have found very high demand for the breathing, postures and meditation techniques because they have been very effective in curtailing behavior issues in classrooms; the two yoga teachers are working diligently to accommodate requests for additional training.
- Yoga conference in Ramallah, West Bank in May 2015 included four teachers from Nablus and hosted by Boulder-based Give Back Yoga Foundation who are members and supporters of the sister city project. Participation at workshop was at full capacity.

Yoga Exchange

- When the Yoga Teachers were in Boulder they had the opportunity to speak to AP History students at BHS and Monarch HS.
- In addition they were hosted by 6 yoga studios throughout Boulder and gave talks throughout Boulder.

Senior Day Center

- Supported the founding of a new senior center by providing funding to purchase appliances and furnishings.
- Historical building renovated in early 2015, and is now open and serving elders.

Substance Abuse Counseling

- Connected Substance Abuse professionals in Boulder with those in Nablus to share expertise and offer support for an almost fully volunteer program in Nablus to address this growing concern.

Art Exchange

- CU Professor and member Dr. George Rivera is traveling to Nablus in early 2016 to meet with the Art Department in Nablus to discuss an art exchange between art students at both universities.

Dance Troupe

- Initiating program to host Youth Dance Troupe from Nablus in Boulder — arranging traditional Palestinian dance workshops in high- and middle-schools, universities, and with the greater

Boulder community. Will arrange home-stays for the young adult dancers to ensure the greatest opportunity for cultural exchange and relationship building opportunities. Anticipating executing the program in 2017, depending on funding.

100 Futbols

- In collaboration with One World Play Project, Lille-Nablus Sister City Project, and Project Hope in Nablus, we have donated 100 indestructible soccer balls (futbols) to 3 dozen agencies serving the neediest children in Nablus.
-

Rock Climbing Wall

- Invitation by An Najah University to collaborate in designing, equipping, instructing, and construction of a rock climbing wall for use by the citizens of Nablus.
 - Engaging rock climbing community of Boulder who are interested in working on this endeavor.
-

Early Readers Program

- Collaboration with the Awtar Center for Artistic and Cultural Creativeness to train women in skills of storytelling to read books created in both English and Arabic. To include weekly readings at libraries, public cultural centers and into homes and neighborhoods.
 - Partnering storytellers and children's book writers/illustrators in both cities.
-

Artisan and Craftspeople

- Supporting a dozen artisans from the Balata Refugee camp through purchase and resale of embroidered items such as scarves, purses, shawls, etc.

Building bridges between citizens of Boulder

Summary of activities from June 2013 to present:

Dialogues and social gatherings with leaders of group 'opposed' to 2013 application

- The BNSCP has, over the past two and a half years, sought opportunities to connect with the organizers, and their community, who opposed the sister city proposal in June 2013. The combined efforts of members and board of directors have resulted in dozens of individual and small group meetings, dinners, shared holiday celebrations, public talks, facilitated discussions, and a collaborative public presentation. Evident has been a willingness by all involved to dialogue with and seek deeper understanding of each other.
- In addition, the BNSCP has sponsored many talks and presentations throughout the Front Range to share with the broader community more information about our project and to help correct any misconceptions that may have been held by some.
- All of the individuals with whom we have been in dialogue have been consistently welcomed to attend meetings, gatherings, and events of the BNSCP.
- Throughout each and every one of these engagements, a strong effort has been made to ease concerns raised by those who originally felt threatened about a sister city relationship with Nablus by demonstrating that BNSCP is guided by its mission and Resolution 631, both help to ensure that BNSCP's activities and aims are not political in nature but exclusively focused on people-to-people connection and collaboration.

Lemon Tree discussions and presentations

- A group from the Nevei Kodesh congregation, the Lemon Tree project, hosted multiple presentations about BNSCP, representing broad perspectives. In addition, several members and directors of BNSCP attend monthly Lemon Tree meetings to engage in cooperative dialogue about sensitive topics in an atmosphere of openness and respecting differences.

Community-wide Talks, Lectures and Outreach activities —

- Sponsored talks, presentations, lectures at Naropa, CU, and at multiple churches.
- Engaged in community outreach by participating in cultural, holiday, and community festivals, UN Day, and other community-wide activities.
- One of the presentations was offered by a global water expert with particular knowledge regarding water issues in the Middle East.

Supporting Documents

Included with this application are the following documents to ensure all requirements of Resolution 631 are met:

1. Letter from Nablus Mayor inviting a sister city relationship with the City of Boulder April 2013
2. Board of Directors' bios
3. Background information about Nablus
4. Map showing the location of Nablus
5. Approved 2015-2016 work plan and budget for the Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project
6. Approved minutes of the April 2015 annual meeting of the Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project
7. Colorado Secretary of State e-filed Periodic Report April 2015
8. Colorado Secretary of State E-filed Articles of Incorporation for the Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project
9. Colorado Secretary of State summary record of Good Standing for the Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project
10. Internal Revenue Service approval of 501(c)(3) tax exempt status for the Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project
11. Colorado Secretary of State e-filed Statement of Change Regarding Resignation or Other Termination of Registered Agent October 2013
12. Colorado Secretary of State e-filed Statement of Change Changing the Principal Office Address October 2013
13. Bylaws for the Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project
14. Approved conflict of interest statement for the Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project
15. Notes of Support from Boulderites (and others) for Nablus becoming a Sister to Boulder

The members of the Boulder-Nablus Sister Project believe this application meets all the requirements of Boulder Council Resolution 631 and that the resulting Sister City relationship with Nablus will promote friendship and understanding between citizens of the two cities.